

## Nembutsu Amusements : Their Formation and Types.

Nembutsu as a religious practice has exercised a great influence upon the development of Japanese theatrical arts. There are in mediaeval literatures various records of the performance of Nembutsu-dance and Nembutsu-kyōgen. Even in the present age we find the chantings of Nembutsu-songs, the performing of Nembutsu-dance and Nembutsu-kyōgen among the common people. Kabuki, the representative of the Japanese theatrical arts, derives its origin from Nembutsu-dance performed by Izumo Okuni, an actress of the 17th century.

Originally, Nembutsu as a religious practice was introduced into Japan by En-nin (794-864) in 847 when he came back from China. Nembutsu thus transplanted was the musical Nembutsu in Five Meetings performed at Godaisan in China. The Nembutsu service performed in the Jōgyōdō on Mt Hiei is this, and from this various Nembutsu amusements have developed. The famous Nembutsu-odori founded by Kūya (903-972) was an amalgamation of this Nembutsu and dengaku-dance indigeous to Japan. The Yūzū-Nembutsu founded by Ryōnin (1072-1132), coming out of this Nembutsu, has become popular among the common people. This Yūzū-Nembutsu, mixing itself with the Odori-Nembutsu of Kūya, has become the Dai-Nembutsu, and, on the other side, connecting itself with the Chabangeki of Sarugaku, has given birth to the Nembutsu-kyōgen.

In this way, Nembutsu is a religious practice which makes us awaken to the Call of Amida Buddha and be born in His Pure Land, and also is the source of various forms of the amusements of the common people, which can still yet be seen in various parts of Japan.

In this paper I have endeavoured to collect such amusements and classified them into various types and arranged them in a definite order, whereby to testify the beginning and development of the Nembutsu amusements.